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"Drive Safely to Wayne State" Campaign, October 9-11, 2006

Wayne State University's faculty, staff and students driving to campus are less likely to get involved in a traffic accident than in the past, according to data compiled by the WSU Transportation Research Group (WSU-TRG) at the College of Engineering.

The TRG staff volunteers its time and resources each year to bring the message of safe driving practices to the Wayne State community during its three-day safety campaign, which has taken place each fall semester since 2004.

"We're always working to improve traffic safety," says Tapan Datta, professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering. "When we see the benefits of our efforts, it just makes us work harder," adds Datta, who is director of TRG and chair of the Drive Safely to Wayne State Campaign.

Drive Safely to Work Week, October 2-6, sponsored by the Michigan Office of Highway Planning, and the Drive Safely to Wayne State Campaign, October 9-11, are designed to make daily commutes to WSU campus safer and raise awareness on such driving issues as aggressive driving (road rage), distracted driving, drinking and driving, use of safety restraint systems and proper use of child safety seats.

The Wayne State event kicks off with an opening ceremony October 9 from 1 to 3 p.m. on the Gullen Mall near the David Adamany Undergraduate Library on Wayne State's main campus in Detroit. Numerous dignitaries will be on hand as well as WJBK TV-2 Traffic Reporter Jackie Paige, the event emcee.

The event includes numerous displays and activities.

Among them are AAA Michigan, TRG and MADD booths, computer displays, a driving simulator, "mocktalls", a crashed car, and information on crashes and other safety information. Prize drawings will also be held for students, faculty and staff.

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Nationally, traffic fatalities continue to rise, but in Michigan, where seatbelt usage has reached an all-time high of 94 percent, fatalities are the lowest since 2001 (at 1,129). Coincidentally, traffic accidents in Detroit have decreased since 1997 by about 37 percent.

This good news will be announced by WSU's Transportation Research Group and the American Automobile Association of Michigan at the Drive Safely to Wayne State opening ceremony, marking the 10th anniversary of AAA Michigan's Road Improvement Demonstration Program (RIDP). The Michigan automobile organization will also present Tapan Datta with a special plaque for providing 10 years of service to AAA in the interest of road safety.

"Traffic accidents in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties have been on the decline as well, but in Detroit the decline is more pronounced", said Datta. The percentage of decline in the city of Detroit, for example, is more than triple the decline in Oakland County.

The city of Detroit was the first public agency to participate in AAA Michigan's RIDP launched in 1996, identifying 86 intersections throughout the city with high traffic accident rates.

"Intersection design improvements recommended by the Wayne State's TRG and other engineering consultants, and implemented by the city of Detroit have resulted in much safer driving conditions in Detroit," said Datta.

The percentage of decreasing traffic crashes takes into account all intersection improvements, whether they were part of the road improvement program or not. The improvements include installation of left-hand turn lanes, all-red (delayed green) signal intervals, and elimination of curb parking for sight distance improvement, and others.